

VZCZCXRO8317
PP RUEHDBU
DE RUEHDBU #0527/01 0990958
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P R 090958Z APR 07
FM AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0013
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHINGTON DC
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 2045
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 2079
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 2050
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 1665

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DUSHANBE 000527

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN, DRL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 4/9/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [EAID](#) [TI](#)

SUBJECT: SETTING THE SCENE FOR DAS FEIGENBAUM'S APRIL 12-15 VISIT

REF: DUSHANBE 525

CLASSIFIED BY: Tracey Ann Jacobson, Ambassador, U.S. Embassy,
Dushanbe, State.
REASON: 1.4 (b)

¶1. (C) Seven months after your last visit, you will find a Tajikistan that has set aside the promises of the November 2006 election, to a government less worried about international perceptions and more confident in tightening its control over society and the economy. President Rahmonov's ministers and advisors continue to argue for the need for stability before democracy, and economics before politics. Dushanbe 525 lays out the bigger picture of Tajikistan's state of play, but your challenge remains the same as in August 2006. You may find yourself repeating the messages you delivered clearly then: democracy and rule of law are essential for economic growth and true political and regional stability, even in post-civil war Tajikistan.

¶2. (C) Your key themes -- reform and regional integration -- will certainly yield a thoughtful discussion from your Tajik counterparts, who understand what the United States and other western and multilateral donors want to see happen in Tajikistan, but deep down, they may not share the same fundamental vision. The Russian-influenced mistrust of non-governmental organizations, particularly those involved in democracy or media activities, has created a number of problems for U.S. assistance implementers and called into question the Tajik government's seriousness about creating a more open political environment -- and improving the climate for private investment.

Reform

¶3. (C) The Tajik government is still not sold on the benefits of democratic reform or political openness. It looks at Ukraine, Georgia and particularly Kyrgyzstan, and questions what good could come out of allowing more political expression and the development of political parties. They may not like Uzbekistan, but the Tajiks admire the "stability" Karimov's regime has wrought and count on the international community to give Tajikistan leeway as long as it remains better than Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan -- the bad examples in the region. We must convince the Tajik government that creating democratic institutions and practices -- such as a reformed judiciary that promotes rule of law, a parliament that is educated and engaged in legislating, rather than serving as a rubber stamp, and a

freer media to inform its citizenry -- are steps that will actually be in the government's interest, and not threaten President Rahmonov's authority.

¶4. (C) Economic reform is more palatable, and the government has taken a few small steps towards improving the investment climate, such as a new law on inspections that could cut the number of inspections in half, a new Committee on Investments and State Property and an Agency to Fight Corruption and Economic Crimes aimed at rooting out corruption on all levels. How these new initiatives are implemented will demonstrate how serious Tajikistan is about linking itself to the global economy.

¶5. (C) Government officials will likely try to parry any discussion of better governance and democratic reform with a request for U.S. investment in the economy and infrastructure. Given the steady flow of state-funded investment from China, Iran and Russia in hydropower, transmission lines, telecom, roads and tunnels, the Tajiks will be looking for the same kind of engagement from the United States -- and will be less interested in hearing that they should improve their business climate to attract private companies.

¶6. (C) You will be asked about debt relief. Despite taking on more than \$800 million in low-interest Chinese loans in the last year, the Tajiks will continue to press the United States to forgive \$17 million in debt from the war years.

Regional integration

¶7. (C) Although the Tajik government shares our enthusiasm for regional integration, Tajik officials define "region" differently, and cannot talk about regional issues without including Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan causes Tajikistan serious

DUSHANBE 00000527 002 OF 002

problems with electricity and gas, customs, imports, exports, visas, landmines, water sharing and even locusts. The August opening of the U.S.-funded bridge at Nizhniy Pyanj will allow the Tajiks more opportunity to bypass Uzbekistan and look to South Asia as a commercial destination and partner.

¶8. (C) Afghanistan remains a subject of great concern, and the Tajiks may press you to do more to stabilize their neighbor. You can assure them that we continue to look for ways to integrate Tajikistan and Afghanistan economically and welcome the positive role Tajikistan can play in building Afghanistan's capacity. You can also press for more accountability and responsiveness on our border programs. Since the reorganization of the Border Guards under the State Committee for National Security, the cooperation has come into question.

Fifteen years and counting

¶9. (C) Your April 13 Keynote speech at the conference on the "Fifteenth Anniversary of U.S.-Tajik relations" presents a wonderful chance to highlight the substantial amount of U.S. assistance and our areas of cooperation. It is also an opportunity to outline the U.S. vision for the region and the bilateral relationship. We look forward to your visit and the dialogue it will bring.
JACOBSON